

Attachment A
A Brief Synopsis of
The Bay Delta Conservation Plan
July 9, 2008

The Bay Delta Conservation Plan is a unique undertaking initiated and funded by many of California's public water agencies and guided by 6 major environmental organizations¹, the state and federal fishery agencies², and other state and local organizations -- all of whom are deeply invested in the long-term sustainability of the Bay-Delta, a healthy watershed, and the region's fisheries. The Steering Committee's meetings are open to the public and are routinely attended by representatives of other forums considering the future of the Delta, including the California Bay-Delta Authority's CALFED program, the Delta Vision process, and the State Water Resources Control Board, as well as other interested observers. Extensive information about the BDCP and the work of the Steering Committee is publically available through the Bay Delta Conservation Plan section of the California Resources Agency's website. Those who are interested in more information about the BDCP are encouraged to visit www.resources.ca.gov/bdcp/.

From the onset, the goal of the BDCP participants has been to formulate a plan that could ultimately be approved by the fish agencies as a habitat conservation plan under federal law and a natural community conservation plan under state law. The overall approach to the planning effort is more fully described in a Planning Agreement, which all of the members of the Steering Committee have signed (and which is available on the BDCP website). On November 16, 2007, the Steering Committee issued a Points of Agreement document, which represents a more recent "way station" in the BDCP's developmental journey and laid the foundation for the work to be performed throughout 2008 and into 2009. This document captured the essence of 18 months of extensive Steering Committee discussions and consultant evaluations and provides an analytical construct from which the more detailed conservation plan would be developed. The document highlights approaches that may be the most promising and has helped the Steering Committee efficiently begin to detail and assess the numerous actions that would compose an effective and comprehensive conservation plan.

The Steering Committee is currently considering an array of conservation approaches for further development and analysis through 2008 and into 2009, which include water supply configurations ranging from "dual conveyance" to full isolation. These approaches coincide closely with the Delta Vision conveyance recommendations. The Steering Committee expects that its future planning efforts to remain closely coordinated with and complementary to Delta Vision's efforts and others undertaken by CALFED and the U.C. Davis Center for Watershed Sciences.

¹ American Rivers, Defender of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Heritage Institute, The Bay Institute, and The Nature Conservancy

² The fish agencies, because of the regulatory role they must exercise at the end to evaluate the plan and potentially issue permits, participate in an advisory or "ex officio" role so as to preserve their independent ability to evaluate the adequacy of the final plan pursuant to their regulatory responsibilities.

The Steering Committee intends that the final conservation plan will be constructed upon a solid scientific foundation, and it has -- and will -- seek independent scientific advice over the course of the planning process to assist in the planning effort. In September 2007, the BDCP conducted its first formal independent science advisory workshop to address the four sets of scientific principles identified by the NCCP Act, while also providing timely and useful guidance to the BDCP Steering Committee on topics, issues, and questions of greatest urgency. This three day workshop followed several informal consultations with the BDCP's Lead Scientist and resulted in a report presented to the Steering Committee on November 16, 2007, which outlined a number of recommendations that the Steering Committee has been responding to while evolving through the planning process. More recently, the Steering Committee has established a three tiered independent science advisory process wherein the level and speed of the response is tailored to suit the complexity of the question. As part of this approach, the second independent science advisory workshop is now being planned for late summer, 2008 to consider the expanding list of covered species.

In transitioning from establishing a planning context into the actual planning effort, the Steering Committee decided to establish several planning workgroups and technical teams to focus upon and develop the many discreet aspects of the plan that will be necessary to ensure its success. To date, the Steering Committee has formed teams to address (1) biological goals and objectives, (2) habitat restoration, (3) conveyance, (4) other stressors --such as toxics and invasive species; (5) implementation structure and governance, (5) analytical tools, and (6) public communications. These planning teams, with the support of the technical consultants, are developing, analyzing, and refining plan recommendations within their topic areas. The work of each team will then be rolled up into a comprehensive conservation plan for ultimate consideration and approval by the Steering Committee.

The overall schedule for the planning effort anticipates that the first draft of a comprehensive conservation strategy will be assembled by the Steering Committee by the end of 2008. That conservation strategy will then be subject to a rigorous public environmental evaluation pursuant to an environmental impact report prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act. The environmental review will evaluate the proposed conservation strategy and other alternatives to identify the best way to proceed. A draft of the environmental review will be available for public review and comment later in 2009. Extensive public hearings on the draft will be conducted by the Steering Committee, and a final report is due at the end of 2010.